

# Turning Up the Stones

## A Reply to Clark's October 13 Message

Murray Bookchin

The May 5th Group's posting on this list (June 13, 1998), and the various subsequent exchanges, have finally led John Clark to attack me and my views with his by-now-typical malevolence (October 13, 1998; at this writing Clark's posting does not appear on the RA List archives). I am only too delighted to have this opportunity, once and for all, to expose his ongoing campaign to defame me. Virtually unrestrained by moral standards, Clark has an indefatigable capacity to slander a critic and distort his or her views, through outrageous gossip, surreptitious character assassination, and falsification. I have had enough of it, and it is time to turn up the stones and reveal the filth in which he has immersed himself and examine his fury against me and my ideas (many of which he has actually hijacked from me, in warped form, over the course of nearly two decades of our misbegotten association).

That Clark, my former devotee, now loathes me with bitter fury can be judged from "Bookchin Agonistes," the article he wrote for an anarchist tabloid under the pseudonym Max Cafard (*Fifth Estate*, vol. 32, no. 1, Summer 1997, p. 20ff). I challenge him to post this disgusting article on the RA List, as he suggests he might, and should he do so, I would be glad to post my response to it (which readers may find on the web already at [http://www.pitzer.edu/~dward/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/whither.html](http://www.pitzer.edu/~dward/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/whither.html)). In this article Clark, dressing himself up as a satirist and hiding behind a pseudonym, promulgates a whole slew of crass and cynical falsehoods that are as revealing of that man's character as they are of the depths to which he can stoop to assail an opponent.

When Bill McCormick, in a letter, urged Clark to acknowledge that he and Max Cafard are the same person, Clark/Cafard responded with characteristic ambiguity (*Fifth Estate*, Fall 1997, p. 34), simultaneously acknowledging his identity in a "satirical" pretence of denying it for the benefit of those who are not knowledgeable of the actual author. This modus operandi could well be called the "Clark Fudge": he extravagantly deceives in the name of "satire," while exploiting the naiveté of any reader in order to suggest that his "satire" is based on truth. The reader who knows that Clark and I were associated for many years might chortle over his remark that he merely spent part of his "youth" naively on the "fringes of the Bookchin cult." A less knowledgeable reader, however, is unlikely to know that in the mid-1970s, when this man's cloying adulation for me and my work first began, he was already in his early thirties - a mature adult physically, albeit a virtual blank intellectually. Although there has never been a "Bookchin cult," I can say that if there had ever been one, Clark would have been its high priest, waxing enthusiastic over my work until he was well into his late forties.

Indeed, a few years after he had abandoned Barry Goldwater as his political guiding star, this man worked his way, quite uninvitedly, into the very centre of my life and remained there for not less than fifteen years, certainly up to 1992, compiling an obfuscatory Festschrift in honour of my sixty-fifth birthday (in 1986) and extolling me in *The Encyclopedia of the American Left* (published in 1992). In turn, I introduced him to a number of influential anarchists (to whom he has since doubtless slandered me with fervour and vulgarity). I also brought him to the Institute for Social Ecology as a visiting lecturer. Over several ISE sessions his discouraged students complained to me that he was an "awful teacher" and said they wanted to avoid his lectures; a number of them told me that he often merely read aloud from his own deadening tracts about the "imagination,"

scarcely taking his nose out of his manuscripts for long periods of time. Nonetheless, as a loyal friend, I encouraged them to attend.

Finally, in the winter of 1992-93 Clark was finally disinvented from the visiting lecturer series by the ISE's curriculum committee (of which I was not a member and whose decisions I generally learn of when I receive the published course catalogue). He was dropped on the particular insistence of the committee's female members who, after examining the poor evaluations that his students gave him, were eager to upgrade the lecture series and at the same time achieve gender balance. In order to spare his feelings, the committee unfortunately never told Clark that one of the most important reasons he was dropped was his inadequacy as a teacher, whereupon this man proceeded to blame me for the disinvention. Actually, at a general Institute faculty meeting in the fall of 1992, I had (rather fatuously) suggested that Clark be asked to teach a course on anarchism. (My proposal is recorded in the minutes of that meeting, which are available on request.)

To be sure, Clark and I had growing substantive disagreements, as I have already explained in "Whither Anarchism?" In 1987 I had sharply criticized David Foreman's remarks that humanity should let "nature take its course" and allow Ethiopian children to starve. (Foreman made these remarks in interview conducted almost reverentially by Bill Devall, one of the two leading deep ecology writers, who had helped bring deep ecology to the United States. Although other deep ecology writers have since criticized Foreman's statement, they have entirely neglected to hold Devall responsible for his genuflections toward Foreman during the interview and for his failure to speak up against Foreman's odious suggestion.) The criticism I wrote ("Social Ecology vs. Deep Ecology," *Green Perspectives*, June-July 1987) linked Foreman's views with some of the basic ideas of deep ecology, including its ugly Malthusianism. By writing this polemical work, I almost

certainly alienated Clark's influential friends (especially members of the environmental academic establishment in which deep ecology was rapidly sinking roots). Clark, for his part, was conspicuously silent throughout my ensuing debate with the deep ecologists. Our friendly relations finally came to an end in early 1993, after which he began to openly criticize me, initiating a sharp polemic against my libertarian municipalist views, from which he read at a social ecology gathering in Scotland in 1995 (even using the epithet "anarcho-Bolshevik" to designate both myself and Bakunin - the historical anarchist, I should add, whom I most admire).

This break not only brought our theoretical disagreements out into the open, as I have already described in "Whither Anarchism"; it also launched Clark into a campaign of character assassination against me, a smear campaign of intense, indeed manic proportions, that continues to this very day. I first became aware of it two years ago, when I telephoned Michael Zimmerman, a philosophy professor at Tulane University in New Orleans. In 1992 Zimmerman had edited an anthology called *Environmental Philosophy* (Prentice-Hall), which contained a section on social ecology. Clark had been the designated subeditor of this social ecology section, which contained my article "What Is Social Ecology?" as well as four others (essays by Janet Biehl, Clark himself, and two works by Clark's cronies, David Watson and Joel Kovel. Neither Watson nor Kovel represented anything that was familiar to me as social ecology, Watson being an anarcho-primitivist, and Kovel an aborning Zen Marxist.)

The reason for my phone call to Zimmerman was that I had learned quite by accident (and *not* from either Zimmerman or Clark) that a second edition of this anthology was going to appear, from which the entire section on social ecology, including all five existing articles, were to be expunged. The entire section, I was told, would be replaced by

one article: Clark's "A Social Ecology" (the one that he permitted the eco-socialist journal *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* to republish, as described by Biehl in her critique of Clark of October 2, 1998, archived at <http://www.nothingness.org/RA/digests/Oct-98/Oct2-98-132.html>). Not only would decency have required that Zimmerman and/or Clark let me know that my article was being dropped (I had provided it gratuitously); it was their moral duty to do so. Had I not learned - entirely accidentally - that my essay was about to be consigned to Prentice-Hall's trash bin, I might still have believed that it was under the publisher's copyright and hence denied permission to the several interested parties who, in the meantime, have asked to reprint it. Ironically, Clark now howls with moral indignation whenever he declares that he has somehow been "purged" from the ISE or from libertarian municipalist conferences.

Having heard this rumour about the elimination of my own article from the anthology, I telephoned Zimmerman, the general editor of the book, simply to inquire about how I could regain the rights to my article. I had always had friendly relations with Zimmerman, despite his strong ties to deep ecology. His immediate response to my telephone call completely astonished me. I had no sooner identified myself by name to him than he furiously shouted: "I am a close friend of John Clark, and I believe you have wronged him terribly!" Thereupon Zimmerman proceeded to accuse me of vague "outrages" that I had supposedly perpetrated on Clark. When I asked him whether he was interested in hearing my side of the story, he shouted back that he was not. When I politely asked to whom I should apply to regain the rights to my article, he refused to tell me directly. Upon hearing this, I quietly told him - yes, *very* quietly - that I no longer cared to continue the conversation and put the telephone receiver back on its cradle. As it turned out, shortly afterward, Zimmerman's conscience seemed to get the better of his arrogance, and he sent me a rather apologetic letter, explaining that the social ecology section was

being removed and informing me how I could regain my rights. (I have since learned that Clark now spreads the story, presumably as evidence of my malevolence, that I "hang up" on people when I do not like what they have to say.) Zimmerman's startling behaviour over the telephone, however, showed me for the first time that Clark has been making a practice of using gossip to assassinate my character by spreading falsehoods about supposedly "outrageous" acts that I have perpetrated against him.

Readers may object that the incidents I have recounted are merely personal, and I have no doubt that this letter will be criticized as ad hominem and gossipy. Which however may amount to saying the John Clark alone has the privilege of whispering and writing abusive personal things about me - and influencing people, as he did Zimmerman - while I must quietly tolerate the defamation of my life and character. In the absence of a wider forum for adjudication, I have no choice but to defend myself here. It takes only a few words to smear someone, particularly on the Internet, but it requires pages and pages to undo the smear.

Moreover, Clark is relatively young, physically able and financially free to travel from conference to conference, where he may repeat whatever he pleases about me without fear of contradiction. By contrast, I am elderly, virtually incapable of walking, and restricted to my home for the most part. If Clark's ongoing campaign to assassinate my character as well as my ideas is beyond the realm of interest of RA List subscribers, then they might do well to surrender their anarchist claim to a unity of means and ends in pursuit of an ethical society and let the devil take the hindmost so far as truth and decency are concerned.

## The Art of Character Assassination

I can only speculate about all the techniques of character assassination that Clark has been employing in recent years. The manipulative use of language is certainly one of them. Consider, for example, his October 13 "Comments for the List," in which he writes that he plans to "criticize" Janet Biehl for denouncing his use of a socialist journal to attack another anarchist. In marked contrast to this genteel verb with reference to Biehl, Clark manipulatively uses the word "attack" with reference to my criticism of him. As it turns out, in the twelve-paragraph letter to which Clark refers (Sept. 16, 1998; archived at <http://www.nothingness.org/RA/digests/Sep-98/Sep16-98-123html#SUBJECT01>), I devoted *one* sentence to his dubious association with CNS. Indeed, the greater part of my letter consists of a reply to "Steve," who had grossly misrepresented my 1994 lecture in London. Moreover, the sentence in which I referred to Clark merely mentions his recent association with CNS and its editor's intention of subverting my eco-anarchist views. This hardly constitutes an "attack." It is self-evident that Clark, by dint of mere repetition, is trying to *condition* the reader into accepting that I "attack" him, into believing that I am an unrestrained aggressor against him, much as Pavlov tried to condition his experimental dogs to salivate at the sound of a bell. I can recall a period when *Time* magazine invariably described any trade union leader as a "labour boss," conditioning its readers to think of the labour movement as dominated by unscrupulous masters, while capitalists were normally depicted as doughty "entrepreneurs," "managers," "executives" - in short, as benign contributors to the public good.

Clark's repetition of other pejorative words to characterize almost everything I say - especially "dogmatic," "sectarian," "non-dialectical," and the like - stinks with an odour of disrespect for the serious discussion of ideas and, not least, reflects a demagogic disdain

for the reader's intelligence. Worse still is his use of vague formulations and his sweeping assertions of a thinker's importance, which substitute for a responsible exploration of a thinker's work. Thus he characteristically rolls out name after name from Lao-tsu to Samuel Alexander, as though the mere compilation of a bibliography were enough to constitute a thoughtful exposition.

The most elusive problem that I am obliged to confront, however, is Clark's use of face-to-face encounters to slander and defame me. An inveterate conference-hopper, as I know from my past association with this man, he relies very much on the personal approach to defame me and distort my views. Allow me to "imagine," to use one of Clark's favourite techniques, a plausible scenario of how he is likely to use this approach.

I should suppose that Clark wanders from conference to conference and from city to city in the United States and various parts of Europe, where he likely encounters comrades who may know of him, at least initially because of his association with me. After a friendly greeting and some chitchat, such a comrade may perhaps express a few words of respect for my work. Clark may prudently agree that my work has some merit, but he may then suggest that it is not quite what it used to be. Indeed, he may note, I have in fact become increasingly intolerant and narrow, or even "dogmatic" and "sectarian." He himself has had something of a falling-out with me, he may explain, and despite all he has done for me, I have in fact "wronged" him (to use Zimmerman's word) in some way. He may note that he was dropped from the Institute for Social Ecology's visiting lecturer series, for example, because of my opposition to the content of his views. The comrade, surprised to hear these tales, may well be inclined to believe them - after all, hasn't Clark known me personally and worked with me for years? Surely he must be familiar with my personal behaviour! Especially since many people today are more than prepared to give

greater credence to psychological explanations than to political convictions or ideas, Clark's malicious gossip is likely to be believed.

The groundwork has now been laid for calling thirty-five years of work into question. Having raised his listener's suspicions, Clark may well go on to embroider on his account of me as an aging authoritarian, a domineering patriarch with a boundless appetite for power. Indeed, as conclusive "proof," he may even point to the fact that in my youth I was a Marxist - and worse, a member of the Communist movement - a Stalinist! What could be more sinister! In earlier years, when Clark publicly adulated me, he was wont to praise the independence of spirit I had shown in breaking away from Marxism and moving in a libertarian direction. Today this very same feature of my biography has been mutated into a liability: evidence of my alleged "authoritarian personality" (or "those with a certain character structure," as he phrases it in his October 13 message). With a knowing look, he may elaborate on stereotypes about Marxist-Leninists to suggest that I never *really* outlived my past. All of these insinuations are brought together to create a scandalous image of me as the contemporary reincarnation of Stalin.

This defamation becomes explicit and is epitomized in the "Confession," by "C.," published in the tabloid *Anarchy* (spring/summer 1998). The full title of Clark's piece is "Confession to Comrade Murray Bookchin, Chairman and General Secretary of the Social Ecologist Party and Founder of Dialectical Naturalism (Dianat)." Here Clark self-servingly casts himself as, say, Nikolai Bukharin, making a coerced confession to me ("Comrade Bookchin"), cast as Stalin, in a tribunal suggestive of the 1938 Moscow show trial. Are readers by now guffawing with laughter? To anyone familiar with Clark or myself, the piece reveals more about Clark's own troubled psyche than about anything factual in my relations with him or anyone else. One might think from reading this

document that Clark is, not a potted campus academic intent on defaming his mentor of nearly twenty years, but something of a victimized working-class hero.

### **From Fantasy to Falsehood**

It is difficult, often impossible, to address a defamation campaign based on gossip that reaches me only second-hand and by inference. But it is much easier to address the palpable falsehoods that arise when Clark's fantasies finally take the tangible form of the printed word. A case in point is Clark's outrageous assertion in the "Confession" that "the most concrete action [I] ever took against corporate capitalism" was to "complain about Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream" (p. 61).

What makes this passage so outrageous is that, having burrowed through my files and unpublished manuscripts, not to speak of the many leaflets I wrote during my hectic political life, this hollow man knows perfectly well that I have risked personal endangerment and suffered police repression in political struggles that cover the greater part of this century.

More than most, he knows that well before 1936 I was involved in unemployed movements, in street fights, in actions to "capture the streets" (as the Communists of the Third Period line put it), in welfare centre occupations, and in numberless hunger marches. More than most, he knows that between 1936 and 1939 I zealously organized support for the Spanish workers' movement, engaged in antifascist street fights, antiwar activities, student strikes (the Oxford Pledge days), and labour organizing in northern New Jersey, one of the major industrialized areas in United States at that time. More than most, he knows that I was assaulted by company goons and Hudson County deputies, threatened, beaten, and arrested. More than most, he knows that as a foundryman (and later a General

Motors auto worker), I was a shop steward and an unpaid union secretary in a plant that contained more than two thousand industrial workers, and that I participated in two major historical strikes, the one immediately following V-J day and the famous General Motors strike of 1948, both of which are regarded as turning points in American labour history.

More than most, he knows that I was among the first to campaign against not only the military but even the peaceful uses of atomic power. More than most, he knows that in 1956 I campaigned for arms to be sent to assist the Hungarian uprising - he has seen in my files the leaflets I wrote and distributed on both occasions. More than most, he knows that in 1963-64 I provided the crucial literature and engaged in the principal organizing work against the construction of a nuclear power plant in Ravenswood, Queens, New York. More than most, he knows that in the civil rights movement I belonged to CORE and got arrested on the opening day of the 1964 World's Fair, where I spent a week in a former prisoner-of-war camp with some two hundred arrestees and most of the rest of the year in court over the arrest. More than most, he knows that in the 1960s, finding no viable anarchist movement in existence in New York, I founded several anarchist groups on my own - one of which, the Anarchos Group, went on to become surprisingly influential despite its limited numbers.

More than most, he knows that I educated both the New Left and the counterculture about the importance of the ecological question, long before they regarded it as an issue; that I wrote the earliest socially revolutionary ecological literature in 1964 and 1965, containing ideas that Clark first encountered not in the works of Elisée Reclus or Lewis Mumford but in my own - notwithstanding his current attempts to rewrite the history of radical political ecology and my role in it. More than most, he knows that in the late 1960s I tried to influence SDS in a left-libertarian direction. More than most, he

knows that during the 1970s I helped form the Vermont section of the Clamshell Alliance (which opposed the construction of a nuclear reactor at Seabrook, New Hampshire) and helped create its left wing.

More than most, he knows that during the 1970s and 1980s I frequently went to Germany and tried, addressing thousands, to keep the German Greens from becoming a parliamentary party. More than most, he knows that during the 1980s I fought to strengthen local democracy in Vermont. And more than most, he knows that in the late 1980s I helped found the Left Green Network to countervail attempts by the likes of statists and red-baiters such as Charlene Spretnak (*whom Clark now praises!*) to turn the American Greens into a political party.

How dare this campus-potted academic impugn my work as an activist! How dare this well-fed, pampered middle-aged hippie, who stood on the sidelines during the Mississippi Summer of 1964, only a few miles from his New Orleans home, reduce more than sixty years of work - among proletarians, unemployed workers, African-Americans, feminists, students, Third World peoples, and antinuclear activists, and in civil rights' organizations and anti-Vietnam-war actions that involved beatings by police, jailings, and economic hardship in major strikes - to complaints about Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream! How dare this man use specious "satire" to defame a lifetime of serious and responsible work in the revolutionary movement!

My political life has been an open book for decades. What can Professor Doctor John P. Clark tells us about his own? Was he ever arrested while fighting against his celebrated mining company or any other struggle? Or for activities in the civil rights movement, which particularly roiled his neck of the woods during the 1960s? If so, how many times? Has he ever set foot in a factory in his life? If so, where and for how long?

Has he ever marched on a labour picket line? If so, where? Has he ever been beaten with clubs by police or been subjected to teargas attacks? If so, where? When? Why does his own past seem to extend not very far beyond the academic cloister?

I did not raise the issue of our comparative political histories - Clark is the one who put it into print. Then let him give us an accounting, now, of his fifty-odd years on this planet! And I would ask all the good anarchists on the RA List to join me in demanding that he either provide such an accounting or desist from spreading any further falsehoods about my past.

### **A Case of Toxic Gossip**

A particularly malevolent sentence in Clark's "Confession" reads: "I promise to always to ... carry a gun, and remain in air-conditioned places like Comrade Bookchin."

Clark knows that, at nearly seventy-eight, I am a diabetic who was once nearly hospitalized for my high blood sugar level. My mother, also a diabetic, died from dehydration during a New York heat wave - a death that could have been prevented by air-conditioning. Air-conditioning has probably saved my own life, as well as those of countless other elderly people, particularly those for whom diabetic dehydration is a very serious danger.

As for Clark's reference to any weapon I carried when I knew him: my present inability to walk even a few feet without the aid of a cane or a wheelchair, let alone run from anyone who tries to assault me, makes me a very easy target for criminals in Burlington. Indeed, late one night in the spring of 1991 (at which time I already needed a cane to walk), as I was leaving my office, I was passing through Burlington's pedestrian mall to get to my car, when I was physically threatened by a drugged young man who

suddenly pulled a metal pipe out from under his raincoat. He brandished it over my head, threatening to crush my skull. What prevented him from finishing me off altogether was a piece of metal equipment that I had in my possession, with which I persuaded him - happily, for both our sakes - to back away. He dropped the pipe, and I hobbled off - past onlookers who had watched the entire episode without lifting a finger to disarm him. They had actually called the police a half-hour earlier because the youth had been menacing other, more agile people as well. The police only arrived (I later learned) about fifteen minutes after my encounter - even though the police station was located only two blocks from where we were standing.

I have made it abundantly clear in my writings that I believe in an armed people as against an armed state. My writings publicly call for a popular civic militia - which is a basic revolutionary socialist and anarchist position, adopted at various congresses of both movements for generations - to replace the state's monopoly of force. RA List members may or may not agree with me, but I have always been consistent in this position - another presumed "anarcho-Bolshevik" view that not only Bakunin but Elisée Reclus, Louise Michel, Alexander Berkman, and Buenaventura Durruti, to cite some of the more outstanding figures in the history of anarchism, also held.

Still, I must pause here to take stock of what Clark did when he put into print the statement that "Comrade Bookchin" carried a gun, thereby informing readers of a widely distributed "anarchist" tabloid (*Anarchy--nebbich!*) that I carried a firearm seven years ago. The readers of this repellent rag include not only a host of lifestyle anarchists but also, very likely, members of state police forces who, had I ventured into nearby New York State, could have arrested me for a felony charge of gun possession, which involves a one-year mandatory prison sentence.

I do not regard Clark's behaviour in this regard as a trivial matter, however much I was within my rights in carrying a weapon in Vermont. Government "security" forces have no love of me. In the late 1970s I was subpoenaed to give testimony in Washington at a federal trial that resulted from the Church Committee's post-Watergate investigations of Nixon's Cointelpro operations. The investigators had brought charges against two major figures in J. Edgar Hoover's old FBI for directing activities against radicals in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1973 the FBI had been keeping close surveillance over me and my collective in Vermont - long before Ben and Jerry, if you please, established their ice cream business and even before I had the appalling misfortune to admit John P. Clark into my life. The two FBI chiefs had ordered agents to invade my vacant New York City apartment, searching for connections between me and wanted Weatherman terrorists (whose ideas and methods I detest). In the late 1970s, after a Church Committee investigation, the two FBI chiefs were placed on trial, and it was due overwhelmingly to my testimony that they were convicted. The FBI, needless to say, was not pleased with me. Ever since, I have had every reason to be wary about doing anything that would allow them to repay me in their own inimitable way for testifying against two of their chieftains.

Moreover, Clark knew of my court experience when he penned his odious "Confession" and put it in print in *Anarchy*. (I strongly doubt that Clark has such difficulty with federal authorities in New Orleans.) How am I to react to this malevolent behaviour? With Taoist resignation? My friend Eirik Eiglad tells me that, at the 1995 Dunoon gathering in Scotland, Clark even had the gall to chortle rather freely, to people he encountered there, about my ownership of a weapon. Should I respond to Clark's endless gossip against me by revealing what I know about his own domestic life? What he described to me in protracted nightly telephone calls about his dysfunctional family? Am I free to disclose the number of air conditioners that cooled his house when I visited him?

Would subscribers on the RA List find such behaviour on my part hilarious or clever? Or simply evidence of the sewer into which Clark drags his critics - an effort in which I will not allow myself to participate? And if so, why is he not censured by RA List subscribers for practicing this behaviour with wild abandon in his "Confession" and "Bookchin Agonistes"?

### **The Reign of Intolerance**

Clark invariably attempts to immunize himself against criticism by dismissing what I say as "dogmatic," "sectarian," and "patriarchal," embellished with *ad hominem* allusions to a "Bookchin cult" and my alleged affinity for "anarcho-Bolshevism" - allusions that doubtless resonate with the eco-Marxists at CNS and some of the salon anarchists who edit *Anarchist Studies*, not to speak of the trash that collects around *Anarchy* and *Fifth Estate*. When all else fails, he can be expected to sidestep my critical analyses completely and pepper his responses with vituperative asides that have little or nothing to do with my remarks.

Thus, should I invoke the importance of defining principles and the need to behave politically in accordance with them, Clark can be expected to declare self-righteously that I am "sectarian," as if the mere use of this word, like a magical token, were sufficient to refute my presumably "intolerant" demand. Should I cite his confusion and vagueness, or point out transparent contradictions in his statements, he can be expected to exclaim with all the vigour at his command that he is being "dialectical" and/or that I am being "non-dialectical," as though the mere invocation of "dialectics" magically turns his normally patent nonsense into sense and his patent inconsistencies into consistencies.

In a single paragraph in "A Social Ecology" (CNS, vol. 8, no. 3, September 1997), for example, Clark manages to pack into only two sentences most of his repertoire of epithets against me, by saying that I have "narrowed [social ecology] through dogmatic [!] and non-dialectical [!] attempts at philosophical system-building [!] through an increasingly sectarian [!] politics, and through intemperate [!] and divisive [!] attacks on 'competing' ecophilosophies and on diverse expressions of [my] own tradition. To the extent that social ecology has been identified with Bookchinist sectarianism [!], its potential as an ecophilosophy has not been widely appreciated" (p. 9). Let me add that if social ecology has not been "widely appreciated" in this reactionary era, I regard it as to my credit, not as a liability! Nowhere in this article, however, is this bellowing about my views supported by a single word of substantiation, let alone in-depth critical elucidation. Like a barrage of bullets, these charges are allowed to pepper the reader's face, as though flinging them were equivalent to providing an account of their meaning. As usual, the trained dogs are expected to salivate when Dr. Clark rings his bell.

Dare I challenge this passage of "criticism," I can expect to be subjected to still another word-barrage: "authoritarian," "divisive," "patriarchal," and, of course, a reprise of "dogmatic" and "sectarian." Clark, in effect, has generated - in my opinion, quite consciously and cynically - a widespread impression that I am the embodiment of intolerance, simply because the reader, by dint of mere repetition, is expected to think that way if Dr. Clark denounces me as such!

Consider another example. In a single paragraph of "A Social Ecology," Clark declares that I meritoriously "give a concrete political direction to a discussion of [a social-ecological] politics in [my] proposals for libertarian municipalism and confederalism." Only five lines later, however, I am presenting "an increasingly sectarian

politics" (p. 9). In fact, my politics are neither "increasingly" or "decreasingly" anything - actually, I have made no significant changes in my ideas on libertarian municipalism since I wrote *Urbanization Without Cities* for Sierra Club Publishers nearly fifteen years ago. The absurdity and hollowness of Clark's claim should be evident to anyone who is reasonably informed about my work.

By contrast, Clark's own views are so diffuse and formless that no one could ever accuse him of being "sectarian" - or substantive - about anything. In his work the word *dialectical* functions as something of a mask for all the patent contradictions that abound in his writings. Merely elevating a weak point in logic, indeed a logical contradiction, to the level of a "dialectical" contradiction, often allows Clark to pass off confusion and absurdity as a foray into philosophy.

Let me note that, notwithstanding Clark's charges about my "intolerance," at the Institute for Social Ecology, where I have taught since the mid-1970s, quite a few people teach and lecture with whom I disagree profoundly - and I have never challenged their right to do so. I have sometimes certainly exercised my right to chide the committee members for inviting people who are explicitly hostile to my views, but I have never tried to influence the curriculum committee to remove a faculty member or lecturer, however unfriendly I thought he or she was to social ecology.

For example, for several years a well-known "priestess" of Wicca, Margot Adler, conducted workshops at the ISE without my uttering a single word of protest to the curriculum committee. When she departed, it was by her own choice. During the long, annoying, and contentious hours that I endured listening Joel Kovel's stern lectures to me arguing that I should support the statist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua rather than Brooklyn Rivera's independent Miskito Indian fighters (who had the support of my native

American friends, John Mohawk and the late Ron LaFrance), I never challenged his right to lecture at the ISE. Indeed, one afternoon after a particularly sharp debate about the Sandinista regime, Kovel, a Zen Marxist (such creatures do exist in America!), and his companion actually stood directly under my dormitory window and blatantly defamed me before the Institute's student body, urging them in the crudest language to mistrust me ideologically and personally, largely because of my views on Sandinismo. Yet not once in the years that followed did I voice opposition to his return as a visiting lecturer, not even after he ceased to speak to me with a bare minimum of civility. Clark, in turn, was the beneficiary of innumerable courtesies on my part, even when we were plainly drifting away from each other. For example, when he compiled and published his shabby and obfuscatory "Festschrift" supposedly in my honour, and my friend Gardner Fair told me of his plan to write a critical review of the book, I made an earnest effort to dissuade him from doing so, in order not to ruffle Clark's overly sensitive feelings.

Outside the context of the Institute, indeed for much of the 1980s, I actually remained on cordial terms with many deep ecology theorists, from Bill Devall to Paul Shepard to Kirkpatrick Sale, in the hope that we could relate to each other in a civil and tolerable manner. It was not until David Foreman called upon Euro-Americans to let Ethiopian children starve and allow "Nature" (read: starvation as a form of "population control" rather than as a social problem) to take its course, and only after Edward Abbey started inveighing against the genetic "inferiority" of non-northern Europeans generally, that it became necessary for me to be "divisive," to use Clark's term, and sharply oppose them, especially when their views became a political issue at the infamous 1987 Green Gathering in Amherst, Massachusetts.

In fact (as I wrote in my RA List message of Sept. 16, archived at <http://www.nothingness.org/RA/digests/Sep-98/Sep16-98-123html#SUBJECT01>), when the FBI arrested David Foreman for suspicion of eco-terrorism, I rallied to his defence over the radio, contributed what I could to his legal defence fund, wrote a supportive letter in his behalf to *The New York Times*, and finally engaged him in a very cordial debate before a full house in New York City. For a time Foreman seemed to modify his reactionary desire to curb immigration into the United States, and I, in turn, spoke up in defence of "wilderness" and other practical matters of concern to deep ecologists. As it turned out, however, Foreman later returned to his more noxious position earlier this year when he promoted the Sierra Club proposal opposing immigration into the United States. (The proposal was defeated in a Club referendum.) I should add that even the liberal president of the Sierra Club was so "divisive" as to object to this proposal, publicly declaring that he would resign if the club passed it. If my behaviour toward these deep ecologists is evidence of my ostensibly intractable "divisiveness," then Clark is free to make the most of it.

Finally, I was overly tolerant of Clark himself when we were closely associated with each other. Several decades ago, when Clark first began to lecture me about Taoist ideas and injected them into his accounts of social ecology, I voiced my very strong objections in private but never put a word into print criticizing him. I even supplied him with the title for his book *The Anarchist Moment* (perhaps its biggest selling point), which he gratefully accepted. The book not only included his highly objectionable "Master Lao and the Anarchist Prince" but a very superficial account of my own ideas, in fact, one that emphasized the "self" so excessively that I sometimes seemed more like a Stirnerite than a libertarian communist. Although there was a great deal in this book that I could have

criticized, I refrained from doing so, keeping my objections entirely within the bounds of my private relationship with this man.

I should note that, to the best of knowledge, Clark never criticized Foreman for his remarks in the Devall interview, let alone acknowledged their link to the biocentric perspective of the "earth community" that pervades deep ecology. For Clark to cozen up to deep ecologists today, like a terrier eager to be petted, and use his quarrel with me patently to earn their approval is worse than opportunistic. If this man chooses to gain the esteem of his professional peers, decency requires that he do so without exploiting our old relationship to the hilt, presumably as an apostate from the "Bookchin cult." May I suggest that this intellectual blank stand on his own two legs rather than hijack and distort concepts from my own work and from my conversations with him?

That Clark's defamation campaign has met with a certain degree of success is not surprising. One wonders, for example, from what source Andrew Light - in his introduction to *Social Ecology After Bookchin* - drew this theme: "In a concrete sense, Bookchin seems to own [!] the ideas of social ecology in such a way that this school of thought sometimes appears to be solely coextensive with his own thought and no one else's. If Bookchin disagrees with the assertion of a challenge to social ecology, then it can apparently be deemed off-base by authority" (New York: Guilford, 1998, p. 10). This theme recurs throughout many of the eleven essays in the four-hundred-page book that Light edited.

Let me make it quite plain that I have never claimed that the words "social ecology" were my own invention, nor even that certain concepts that I include in it are derived exclusively from me.

Quite to the contrary: Although the label had long fallen into disuse in the 1960s and 1970s, I was at pains in *The Ecology of Freedom* (pp. 22-23) to attribute them to E. A. Gutkind, who had been all but forgotten at the time, and I even quoted him, although the meaning he gave the words had very little bearing on my own ideas. In one of my earlier essays, I was eager to attribute the phrase "unity in diversity" to Hegel. (In "A Social Ecology," on pp. 7-8, Clark attributes this phrase to Mumford - without telling us where it can be found in Mumford's writings.) I have expressly attributed the statement that "humanity is nature rendered self-conscious" to Fichte, ca. 1800 (as I did in *The Ecology of Freedom*, p. 315), although I qualified its meaning, inasmuch as I would hardly regard humanity as it exists today as "nature" - or even society! - "rendered self-conscious," but only potentially so. (Clark attributes the aphorism to Elisée Reclus, who wrote long after Fichte, but he does not qualify its meaning at all, thereby implying that he (preposterously) regards humanity today as "nature rendered self-conscious."

In any case, Gutkind's "social ecology" did not refer to any coherent radical outlook, least of all one that calls for the creation of a revolutionary libertarian communist movement. Nor does the "social ecology" taught at the University of California at Irvine, which uses the name for a program that also has nothing to do with my work. In Germany the label was picked up by the late Rudolf Bahro, who held a chair in "social ecology" at Humboldt University in Berlin and used it to apply to his spiritualistic-authoritarian views. The Institute for Social Ecological Research in Frankfurt, which is connected with the social democrats in Germany, also uses it, as I am sure other institutions do as well. I have not objected to these uses of the name "social ecology," any more than I have objected to John Clark's use of it - I have not taken out a patent on the name. When Clark inveighs incessantly that I claim to possess "orthodox" social ecology, he wantonly distorts the facts.

What I object to vehemently, however, as a matter of principle, is the *content* of a social ecology that dilutes the radicalism to which I imparted it and *compromises with the existing social order*. Thus, even though Clark is making a transparent attempt to hijack the name "social ecology" in the sense that I have always used it, what I oppose is his recasting it in the form of his own trivial mystical ecocommunitarianism - which is certainly far less "divisive" and far safer and more accommodating to the present social order than the revolutionary left-libertarianism that I present under that name. What I have done - and will continue to do - is object, not to others' use of the name "social ecology," but to the *content* of ideas presented under that name - be they John Clark's, Rudolf Bahro's, or anyone else's - when the radical substance of those ideas is dissolved and social ecology is divested of its historical revolutionary tradition.

As for the alleged forerunners of social ecology whom Clark mentions: Up until a few months ago, I had never read the supposedly ecological work of Elisée Reclus. It is all but unavailable in English. The few pamphlets that are available, I found decent at times but not very searching or stimulating, and they caused me to suspect that my old anarcho-syndicalist critic, Philippe Pelletier, may well be correct in contending that any claims that Reclus was a political ecologist, let alone a social ecologist, are distortions (in *Itinéraire* nos. 14/15, 1998). Reclus certainly seems to me, as to Pelletier, to be more of a "social geographer." On the other hand and probably in marked contrast to Clark, I greatly admire Reclus for his libertarian communist outlook, his fighting, indeed agonistic spirit, and his role in support of the Paris Commune - militant activities that are completely alien to Clark's nature.

As for Kropotkin, I have praised him as a forerunner of social ecology and have never taken exception to various anarchists who compare my views with his - particularly,

once again, with his libertarian communism. Indeed, I very emphatically invoked Kropotkin during my keynote speech to the first gathering of the U.S. Greens at Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1987. At that time I was intent on urging the American Greens to become a left-libertarian organization and work to form communal confederations, rather than go in the direction of statism and party-formation (which is the direction they in fact took). I was delighted to be able to cite an anarchist thinker whose work had some bearing on ecological problems, certainly as a precedent for a decentralist ecological politics. I have no difficulty in placing myself in the same tradition as Kropotkin - although I am troubled by his sociobiological tendencies, especially his treatment of mutual aid as an instinctive drive. Nor do I agree with him that nonhuman animals are moral creatures in any sense that parallels human morality. (Obviously this is not the place for me to explore this or many other points of interest in Kropotkin's work.)

For Clark to write (in "A Social Ecology") that I merely "broaden the theoretical basis of the communitarian, organicist, and regional tradition developed by Reclus, Geddes, and Mumford by making dialectical analysis a central focus" is, however, beneath contempt: one can just as brightly say that Marx's revolutionary insights into capitalist exploitation merely "broadened" David Ricardo's labour theory of value. However one may feel about my dialectically phased social ecology, it grossly distorts it to declare that it is not significantly different from the work of my predecessors, as a reading of their work and mine clearly indicates. Nor does my dialectical working out of the rise of hierarchy (increasingly verified, I may add, by anthropology) simply provide a "broader account" of Mumford's primarily descriptive account of the "transformation of organic society into the Megamachine," to cite another appraisal by Clark. In fact, I do not find the very concept of the Megamachine particularly insightful, let alone explanatory or analytically useful.

Before closing this section, let me note that it was once regarded as excitingly nondogmatic and nonsectarian to seek truth as against conventional wisdom. Seekers of truth, willing to fight for it even if it meant they stood alone, were commonly mocked as "sectarians" because they failed to pander to widely accepted views. Clark's campaign of defamation against me, I submit, results in large part from his fear of risking his professional reputation and growing popularity with deep ecologists and mystics, who are very much in tune with the conventional wisdom in ecological thinking today. If anything, Clark manifestly conforms to the "nonsectarian" - and unprincipled - ambience of the 1990s. In his backward march toward popularity, his "a social ecology" will eventually become ever more compatible with postmodernism, Asian mysticism, and whatever else is in fashion - which raises serious questions about the potential his views hold for generating radical social change. If anything, his cries regarding my "dogmatism" and "sectarianism" echo the prevailing sentiment of ideological reaction that is very much in the air in the 1990s.

### **What Is John Clark?**

So invertebrate, so formless, so nebulous are Clark's own ideas that he will certainly never run the risk being called dogmatic - or substantive. Indeed, so squamous is his outlook, and so lacking in focus has he become, that he is ambiguous even about his relationship to anarchism. In a symposium around his article "A Social Ecology" in *CNS*, for example, the Zen Marxist Kovel introduced Clark's views as "set squarely in the anarchist tradition" - a description from which Clark proceeded to distance himself, asserting that he not only "hesitates" to depict his views as "set squarely in the anarchist tradition" but has "yet to find any tradition that has even a relative monopoly on truth"

(CNS, vol. 9, no. 1, March 1998, p. 38). Precisely what a "relative monopoly" may be, I will leave to Clark's dialectical prowess to explain.

Such prudent ambiguity, however, permeates many of Clark's recent writings and makes it possible for him to earn encomia from an avowed statist like Kovel, to co-moderate an Internet discussion list on anarchism - and to flirt with Arne Naess, the Norwegian papa of deep ecology, who praises Clark for "bridging gaps" between social and deep ecology - explicitly in contrast to that intractable rogue Bookchin (CNS, vol. 8, no. 1, March 1997, p. 76). Even as this flirtation is taking place, Naess himself is moving toward an ever more authoritarian position, with support for a very strong centralized state.

To cite a recent example of Clark's unprincipled kowtowing to Naess and the movement for which he speaks: In a review of the anthology *Minding Nature*, Clark reproves the book's editor for failing to include an essay on Naess, "whose ideas on decentralization," he affirms, "... might have qualified him for consideration" (*Environmental Ethics* vol. 20, no. 2, [Summer 1998], p. 202). Indeed, what can be said about Naess's "ideas on decentralization"? To a dazzling degree, Naess is on the road to becoming an outspoken advocate of a strong centralized state, a position whose logic implies some kind of "eco"-authoritarianism. In his 1980s book - translated into English as *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* (Cambridge University Press, 1989) - Naess averred, or possibly lamented, that "deep ecologists seem to move more in the direction of nonviolent anarchism than towards communism. Contemporary nonviolent anarchists are clearly close to the green direction of the political triangle." Only a few lines later, however, he observed that "with the enormous and exponentially increasing population pressure and war or warlike conditions in many places, it seems inevitable to maintain

some fairly strong [!] central [!] political institutions." Moreover, he added, the "higher the level of local self-determination, the greater the need for a central authority" (p. 157). It is difficult to construe these remarks as anything but a call for a strong state.

Should these statements have been ignored? Apparently they simply passed Clark by, even though I had earlier pointed them out. Clark, by 1996, was making overtures to Naess and deep ecology. "It is true," he wrote in the journal *Inquiry*, "that both Naess and [Robyn] Eckersley support a mixture of decentralization and centralization, rather than extreme decentralization (although Naess seems to be relatively more decentralist). Their positions are not inherently in conflict with social ecology, unless that ecophilosophy is identified with all the views of Murray Bookchin, including his municipalist politics. While I would argue for radical decentralism, I do not see how a dialectical perspective could foreclose debate on an empirical, historical question such as the proper degree of decentralization optimal in any given social and ecological context" ("How Wide Is Deep Ecology?" *Inquiry* 39, June 1996, p. 201).

Naess's enthusiasm for statism, however, was becoming even more explicit than it had been in 1989. "In the next fifty years," he declared eight years later, in a 1997 interview with Andrew Light, "you cannot expect that Bookchin's sort of special [!] utopian wish of a future society will be a general one." Indeed, he emphasized: "I believe in lots [!] of centralism in the next century. *Anarchism won't work*" (CNS, vol. 8, no. 1, [March 1997], p. 78, emphasis added). The interviewer thereupon asked Naess whether he thinks that "lots of centralism" is actually "going to come about" or whether it is something that "we are going to need." To which Naess emphatically responded, "Again and again central authorities must coerce local communities ... central authority is necessary" - an approach whose legitimacy, Naess said, is "completely pragmatic." Thus

far - a year after they were made - I have seen nothing from Clark that distances himself from Naess's authoritarian-state position.

If Clark has now reached a point where he is willing to negotiate antistatism with a statist, then he is indeed not "set" in any anarchist tradition - neither squarely, roundly, obliquely, tangentially, or incidentally. Indeed, when Clark puts quotation marks around the word "competing" in the phrase "'competing' ecophilosophies" (in his RA List message), to refer presumably to social ecology and deep ecology, he suggests that his ideas contain no significant contradiction with deep ecology. Which raises the troubling question: What, after all, *is* John Clark? Does he regard Naess, a man who emphatically demands "lots of centralism," as having an ideology that is in some way distinct from and decidedly "competing" with his own or that of any anarchist? If not, then can Clark be taken seriously as a libertarian theorist?

The Naess case is not the only instance where Clark has recently made mealy-mouthing overtures to statists. Quite recently, on the RA List (June 14, 1998), he unexpectedly erupted with words of praise for Charlene Spretnak, a rabid spokesperson for the parliamentary, decidedly centralist, and explicitly antileftist wing of the U.S. Greens - the wing I and others were vigorously opposing in 1987, when I invoked Kropotkin at the Amherst Green gathering. Clark now says he "admires" this woman, a proponent of goddess spirituality who has been attacking the libertarian left in the Greens for more than a decade - indeed, since even before my 1987 speech. To this day she continues to blame "anarchists and leftists" in the U.S. Greens for that party's ills, as though the Greens' insatiable appetite for national and state office, in the 1990s, need be a source of any concern whatever to her.

To state my views quite directly: our deeply "nonsectarian" anarchist (if Clark actually still regards himself as one at all) is in reality becoming quite the social democrat. In 1996 the Delta Greens (of which he is the leading figure) blithely supported Ralph Nader in his candidacy for U.S. president on the Green ticket. Far from criticizing the U.S. Greens for running any presidential candidate at all and thereby legitimating the nation-state, the Delta Greens' newsletter called upon its readers to donate funds to Nader's electoral campaign. "From the grassroots ... Important!" reads the notice, in an issue co-edited by John Clark. "We need to raise \$500 immediately for the filing fee to put Ralph Nader on the presidential ballot in Louisiana. ... We hope that the Delta Greens will be able to contribute most or all of the funds needed" (*Delta Greens Quarterly*, no. 43 [summer 1996], p. 3). If such efforts are instances of anarchist activity, then I feel obliged to ask if the word *anarchist* has meaning any longer, let alone any defining principles. If such unprincipled eclecticism is the alternative to Bookchin's "dogmatism" and "sectarianism," then I happily celebrate my "dogmatic" and "sectarian" opposition to the nation-state. I predict that Clark, for whom "the Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao," will in time move ever farther from the being "squarely in the anarchist tradition" to become a complete social democrat.

The role of theory is not only to generalize but, especially in its dialectical form, to speculate - to critically explore what is implicit in any viewpoint, to think beyond the given and try to examine its logic. Naess's drift toward a strong state was already evident in his 1989 book, but Clark failed to grasp it. As he has done so often in the past, he demonstrates a feeble capacity to think dialectically, at the very least; and his capacity to see beyond the most explicit remarks seems barely to exist at all, while his level of speculative thought is comparable to that of an intellectual novice. To place the future of social ecology in the hands of this man would be to reduce its expansive dialectical

outlook to a wormlike view of reality and to hopelessly compromise, indeed destroy, its radical integrity.

### **CNS, Anarchism, and Marxism**

It is by no means inappropriate to examine the venue that John Clark chose to use to inform the universe that he is no longer "set squarely in the anarchist tradition." Given his opportunism, I was not surprised to find that it appeared in *CNS* - a largely eco-Marxist periodical, edited by an admirer of Fidel Castro, that unquestionably "competes" with social ecology and has been conducting an overheated anti-Bookchin campaign, precisely because of my antistatist and eco-anarchist views. RA List readers will recall that in her recent message on Clark (Oct. 2, 1998), Janet Biehl criticized Clark particularly for using *CNS* as a venue to publish his article criticizing me ("A Social Ecology") - in the midst of *CNS*'s extravagant anti-Bookchin campaign. (Lest there be any doubt that *CNS* is waging such a campaign, readers may refer to the list of recent *CNS* issues that Biehl provided.)

It is reasonable to ask why would *CNS* have been interested in publishing Clark's article. The answer is perhaps suggested by something that a former book review editor of *CNS*, John Ely, once told me. According to Ely, *CNS*'s editor-in-chief James O'Connor once remarked that he considered me the periodical's "main enemy." (O'Connor, who is notorious for his authoritarian behaviour, subsequently purged Ely and others from the editorial board, which may well account for Ely's willingness to inform me of O'Connor's attitude.)

In response to Biehl's criticism that he permitted this eco-socialist periodical to publish his article amid a campaign against an anarchist - and I would add, his former mentor for nearly two decades - Clark declared with icy hauteur, "I entirely reject the

implication that a journal such as *CNS* is some kind of 'enemy' publication. ... I have the greatest respect for it as an intelligent journal of the non-dogmatic, independent left. It has included contributions from many "who do not fit into any narrow eco-Marxist mould," he added, citing several examples of non-Marxists whom the journal has published.

This demagogic and opportunistic reply typifies Clark's entire methodology. Although it is true that amid the many Marxist articles in *CNS*, one may find articles by a number of non-Marxists, they are usually innocuous and seldom challenge O'Connor's vulgar Marxist views. Accordingly, *CNS* did not hesitate to publish an article by the late Judy Bari, who is often mistaken for and whom the journal's editors rather loosely described as "one of the first Americans to try to marry Marxism with deep ecology" (*CNS*, vol. 8, no. 2, June 1997, p. 1). Although it is true that *CNS* published Tom Athanasiou - a friend whom I deeply respect - his journalistic articles on corporate abuse of the environment, while highly informative, could have been published in any left-leaning periodical. It is also true that *CNS* published a few brief, uncontroversial book reviews by Paul Fleckenstein, a man I once worked with years ago but whose politics are entirely unknown to me these days; and it is true that it published John Ely, who once described himself to me as a "social democratic anarchist," whatever that may be.

But it would be the height of naiveté to believe that *CNS*'s editor-in-chief, James O'Connor, by granting Clark a *very* considerable amount of space in two consecutive issues of *CNS*, was not attempting to reinforce his campaign against me and my anarchist views - or to believe that Clark could possibly be unaware of it! Indeed, it would be equally naive to think that Clark was not eager to ingratiate himself with the O'Connor crowd and express a degree of accord with the views of opponents - if you please! - whose legitimacy as libertarian ecologists should be challenged.

As it turns out, in fact, although articles by non-Marxists do appear in CNS, O'Connor himself has no illusions about the priority of Marxism over all other political outlooks. As O'Connor sternly warned a few years ago:

"There is no democracy of political theory. Red green politics is not like a visit to the shopping mall, buying this or that idea, and using them when the mood strikes. Some ideas and combinations of ideas are more equal than others. . . . [A]n ecological Marxist theory of capitalist accumulation and crisis, competition, world market, and so on is the key to whatever one wants to regard as the truth of the matter. Anarchism, multiculturalism, bioregionalism, and ecofeminism in this sense all depend on an ecological Marxist outlook." (*CNS*, no. 5, vol. 1, March 1994, p. 17)

All I can say is: Good for O'Connor! The man does not mince words! His fundamental reasons for opposing anarchism go far beyond his aversion for my work. As he emphatically told me several years ago, during the course of more than one telephone conversation, our modern complex society requires a state to coordinate a modern "complex" economy. (It is worth noting that not even Marx, Engels, or for that matter Lenin believed that the existence of a state was a permanent social condition; indeed, with the achievement of communism, they believed, the administration of people would be completely replaced by the administration of things.) If only for this reason, O'Connor strongly emphasized to me that he regards anarchism as an anachronism or worse. And he is quite right to regard me as a true ideological opponent - even an outright enemy, if you please. By allowing his article to be used as part of O'Connor's anti-Bookchin campaign, Clark reveals an unscrupulousness, a lack of principle, and an unrestrained opportunism that stands sharply at odds with any degree of political integrity.

One more point about CNS's anti-Bookchin campaign should be made: I have not replied to O'Connor's campaign against my views in the journal's own pages, and I wish to take this opportunity to explain why. My reason goes back some five years, to 1993, when CNS published an article by Andrew Light titled "Rereading Bookchin and Marcuse as Environmental Materialists" (vol. 4, no. 1, March 1993), which argued for a similarity between my views and Marcuse's. I regarded Light's argument as erroneous and phoned O'Connor to say that I wished to write a response. Initially O'Connor flatly *refused* to grant my request, and it was not until I strongly protested on the grounds that my own name appeared in Light's title that, after considerable haggling, he finally agreed to give me several pages in his journal - no small concession, this! Since Light would be replying to my reply, we also agreed that I would have the right to reply again for all of two double-spaced manuscript pages.

My initial reply to Light's original article was published in the June 1993 issue (vol. 4, no. 2), followed by Light's rejoinder. I found Light's rejoinder also to be very much off the mark, so I called O'Connor to discuss the deadline for my second reply. Not only did O'Connor renege on his original promise to permit a reply, but despite my civil tone throughout the conversation, he raised his own voice almost to the point of a shriek, then suddenly shouted "Fuck you!" and slammed down the phone. Nothing could now induce me now to submit anything to *CNS* for publication, not even in self-defence against the pounding campaign that is currently under way.

As to suppression and purging, let me note again the silent suppression of my essay from the Zimmerman-Clark anthology. More recently I was refused the right to answer eleven critics of my work in an anthology titled *Social Ecology After Bookchin*, which has recently been published by Guilford Press (as a part of a series whose general

editor is James O'Connor). The book is composed entirely of essays critical of me in varying degrees, including pieces by Clark, Joel Kovel, David Watson - indeed, my entire fan club. Several years ago, when I first learned that this anthology was being prepared, I asked the house editor at Guilford for the opportunity to write a response at the end of the collection. This indulgence, let me note, is a common practice for such anthologies. In fact, if individuals who are the object of a full volume of criticism are still alive, they are even requested to respond. This was done for Hannah Arendt, Juergen Habermas, and many other thinkers on whom critical essays have been anthologized.

The house editor at Guilford, to whom I addressed my request, advised me that he would forward the request to Andrew Light, who happened to be the editor of the anthology. I never received a reply. Quite recently, however, Light visited me during a trip to Burlington and, among other things, explained what had become of my request. It appears that when Guilford passed my request on to Light (he told me), he decided to hold a "referendum" on the question of whether I should be permitted to reply, among the book's contributors. To this day I fail to understand why such a referendum should have even been necessary. As editor of the volume, Light ostensibly had the authority to make such a decision on his own, without having to consult anyone. In any case, the "referendum" apparently consisted of a simply query: Should I be allowed to respond to the contributors' criticisms of me? Their answer, he told me, was no. I feel obliged to ask: How did Clark (who is a contributor to the book) cast his vote during this referendum? (Interestingly, Light remarked to me during his visit that while he was in the process of compiling the book, he felt that he "could have used some training in psychology." Exasperation was written all over his face. "There was so much Oedipal stuff going on!" he exclaimed.)

Under what circumstances would it ever be possible for me, in the future, to criticize *anyone* without a sneering Clark or the clutch of people aping him bellowing that I am trying to assert my "authority" over the domain of social ecology? It is to be presumed that everyone has the right to express disagreement with any view, a right Clark vehemently claims for himself. Am I, by contrast, to be denied that right? There is a considerable measure of authoritarianism in ugly attempts to silence me by refusing to let me defend myself. Indeed, that I should have to raise this complaint is as humiliating to me as it is revolting, and my dear anarchist critics are now hearing it for the last time.

Finally, I should add that I am not at all happy with the reply I received from Alain at *Refractions* about the publication of one of my articles in a "debate" with Clark that appeared in that periodical (Summer 1998). Minimally, I believe that the *Refractions* editors should have asked me for my permission before they translated and published my response to Clark's very specific attack on libertarian municipalism, which had little to do with "A Social Ecology," which they published alongside it. I definitely would not have given my consent. To any uninformed reader of *Refractions*, the two articles must have seemed to totally miss their targets - I was talking about one subject and Clark was talking about a completely different one. My differences with "A Social Ecology" are much more fundamental than my differences with "Municipal Dreams." If *Refractions* lacked the time to wait for me to write a reply to "A Social Ecology" in the same issue, its editors at the very least could have asked me for a reply in a subsequent issue.

Moreover, as a matter of simple courtesy and mutual respect, the editors should have sent me a copy of the issue of *Refractions* that contained the *débat*. This, too, was never done. I learned about the whole affair only indirectly, from a friend, and obtained a copy from still another friend. The most conventional bourgeois publications treat authors

more respectfully and appropriately. When I complained of this behaviour on the RA List, what I received from *Refractions* was a minimal message advising me that the periodical took no sides between Clark and me, and that it had been pressed for time (RA List, Sept. 18; at <http://www.nothingness.org/RA/digests/Sep-98/Sep18-98-125.html>). Thank you, comrades, for this lesson in anarchist ethics!

### **Clark on Philosophy; or, the Arrogance of Ignorance**

But let us turn to more substantive matters - indeed, let us ascend from Clark's gutter to his empyrean heights, namely to philosophy, a field in which Clark privileges himself a "professional."

In her RA List message of October 2, Janet Biehl challenged Clark's sudden, indeed surprising, attempt to distance himself from mysticism. She pointed out that in the "Dialectical Holism" section of "A Social Ecology" (the article in which Clark articulates his philosophical outlook), the individual thinkers he invokes as his antecedents are all either mystical or religious. To most reasonably sane people, this would suggest that Clark is in some sense a mystic, and one would think that Clark himself would have no difficulty acknowledging this obvious fact about his own work. For reasons that remain quite unclear, however, Clark, in his reply to Biehl (October 13) wants us to think of him as a rationalist, glibly ignoring the contradiction between reason and mysticism - a contradiction that has historically been highly explosive, often sundering entire social movements from each other, and one that has reassumed major importance today, when mysticism is eating away at reason and science with appalling vigour.

Biehl noted, for example, that Clark's article, with all its mystical and/or religious antecedents, makes reference to "a primordial continuum, the eternal one-becoming-many,

the ground of being ... the reality [!] that precedes all conceptualization' (p. 14) ; 'transpersonal consciousness' (p. 10); 'plasma of being' (p. 14); 'the groundless Ground,' '... a non-objectifiable grounding of being' (p. 14); the 'continuum that underlies the diversity of beings' (p. 14); the 'ontological matrix' (p. 16), and so on."

Instead of freely acknowledging the mysticism that permeates his own outlook (not to speak of the very real dualism between a metaphysical "being" on the one hand and the highly differentiated and differentiating natural world on the other), Clark goes into a flap. He furiously accuses Biehl of misreading him, even to the point of patronizingly questioning "her conception of the nature and scope of philosophy." "All of this appears to her to be no more than incomprehensible, mystical nonsense," he irately complains. Instead of acknowledging Biehl's general point that his philosophy is indeed mystical, he implies that he is rooted at least as much in a secular philosophical tradition that works with the idea of a "reality that precedes all conceptualization." He situates this formulation in Kant's well-known "epistemological turn" (which posits an unknowable a-priori noumenal realm that must always remain inaccessible to us, in contrast to the phenomenal world structured by the categories of our minds). Kant, despite his discussion of the limits of reason, I should note, was strongly committed to Enlightenment rationalism.

Actually, Clark's use of the phrase a "reality that precedes all conceptualization" appeared to Biehl to be mystical or religious, not because she is ignorant of philosophy or needs remedial lessons from Dr. Clark on Kant's "epistemological turn," but because, in "A Social Ecology" (p. 14), Clark used this phrase in the context of a discussion, *not* of Immanuel Kant, but specifically of Lao-tzu - a mystic - complete with a quotation from the *Tao te Ching*! Clark actually appears to have forgotten that it was Lao-tzu whom he had in mind. The Lao-tzu quotation is followed by affirmations of similar ideas in Joel

Kovel, Jakob Boehme, and Alfred North Whitehead - outlooks have nothing whatever to do with Kant's "epistemological turn" but rather with a religio-mystical view of the world.

This is not a "hasty dismissal of philosophical inquiry," as Clark contemptuously puts it. Nor is it an attempt to ignore arguments in Western (and Eastern) thought about the extent to which "our knowledge is conditioned and mediated, and is not a direct insight into the pure [!] nature of things," as Clark accuses Biehl. Rather, it is a typical Clark Fudge. In fact, a number of the mystics whom Clark cites with approval believed that their faith, intuition, and/or ineffable insight provided them with "a direct insight into the pure nature of things" that *reason* was incapable of achieving.

For her part, Biehl was simply recapitulating the names of mystical and religious thinkers whom Clark invoked in his own article. If Clark intended to use Kant's notion of a "reality that precedes all conceptualization" in a secular sense, he should have done so quite explicitly in "A Social Ecology." Instead, in order to suddenly present himself as some kind of secular rationalist on the RA List, he deftly pulls Kant like a rabbit out from his philosophical hat. In fact, Kant has always been around for epistemological thinkers to refer to - and they have done so time and again. Clark, it should be noted, did no such thing, for the likely reason that he was thinking of matters mystical in "A Social Ecology" - and only later decided to secularize his position in response to Biehl's criticism by shifting from a basically ontological to a basically epistemological position. In short, Biehl's analysis is quite sound: Clark began with a mystical and ontological outlook; then, in another Clark Fudge, altered his position by invoking Kant's "epistemological turn," when he was caught with his pants down.

In his RA List message, Clark downplays his mysticism and presents himself - among other things - as a rationalist. "I certainly do not give any kind of *priority* to

mystical experience (or any other kind) as a source of truth and knowledge," he tells us indignantly. "Analytical rationality, speculative reason, empirical knowledge, dialectical analysis of phenomena, and other approaches to knowledge are obviously fundamental paths to truth." Mysticism, religion, and intuition here remain carefully concealed under the expansive skirts of the phrase "other approaches," as does the relative weight they may carry in Clark's intellectual armoury.

Obviously one must give "priority" to one method over another, depending upon the *level* of reality one is exploring. One does not use dialectics, for example, to build a bridge or a house, still less Reimannian geometry; one uses analytical logic and conventional mathematics. I know - I was a structural steel detailer for years, and if I had not given "priority" to analytical logic and Euclidean-based trigonometry, all the buildings I worked on would have collapsed. On the other hand, one should definitely give "priority" to dialectics when addressing natural evolution, history on a broad level of generalization, and political economy as a critique of a social order (rather than mere price determination and stock market investments).

But by no means does one today give "priority" to mystical "knowledge" as a means of acquiring a "direct insight into the pure nature of things" - that is, "priority" to an archaic, regressive, and often socially dangerous "insight" that, by its nature, is highly arbitrary and immunized from discursive challenge. My point is that all the methods to which one should give "priority" - especially in political and social affairs, which we are discussing here - are secular, not mystical, and their legitimacy has been vindicated over centuries of struggle by materialists and naturalists against shamans, priests, magicians, and idealists, who have tried to establish the "priority" of everything from dreams to divinations over reason, logic, and science. Clark, in his accommodation to an era that is

turning away from reason toward mysticism, is opportunistically reasserting archaisms against the great achievements of the Enlightenment over the past three centuries.

In the outlook described in "A Social Ecology," he clearly gives "priority" to mysticism and religion. As he puts it, he wants to "give meaning to an ecological spirituality that will embody the truth of the religious consciousness ... a synthesis of the religion of nature and the religion of history" (p. 16). Still further, we are told that this synthesis "consists of a response to the sacredness of the phenomena ... an expression of wonder and awe at the mystery [!] of becoming" (p. 16). Finally, he quotes approvingly Errol Harris's regressive injunction that "[t]o repudiate spirit and reject all religion is ... to paralyze the dialectic, and in effect to abandon it" (p. 16, n. 33). Which is to say that, without religion no dialectics is truly possible! So much for the liberating role of the Young Hegelians, who tried to free dialectics and philosophy generally from the grip of Prussian-supported reactionaries who emphasized the religious and statist dimensions of Hegel's thought. What should baffle the reader of Clark's October 13 message is his repudiation of the mystical parts of his "A Social Ecology" less than a year after its publication.

Another example of Clark's last-minute fudging when he is criticized is his discussion of Spinoza in his October 13 RA List message. Spinoza, truly a man for all seasons who has been used and misused from generation to generation for highly contradictory purposes, surfaces when Clark accuses Biehl of "subsum[ing] a vast range of philosophers under the category of 'mysticism' and then attribut[ing] to these thinkers views that some of them have not only rejected but indeed combated." Who, one might ask, makes up this "vast range of philosophers"? Quite surprisingly, Clark adduces only a

single thinker, Spinoza, whom he describes as "one of the most notable rationalistic 'mystics' of Western philosophy."

Biehl, however, never mentioned Spinoza, never called him a mystic, and she tells me that she would not include him in the category of "mystic" at all, since she considers him to be far too much of a rationalist. In fact, she and I both agree with Frederick Copleston (whom Clark apparently considers enough of an authority on Spinoza to quote on the subject) that "one must not let oneself be misled by the use of phrases such as 'the intellectual love of God' into interpreting Spinoza as though he were a religious mystic. The notion that the philosophy of Spinoza was a philosophy of religious mysticism arises only if one persists in neglecting his definitions of terms like 'God' and 'love.'" (Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 4, 1978, p. 263). Copleston rightly warns that the notion that Spinoza was a mystic is a fallacy: "the German romantics in general ... thought they found in Spinoza a kindred soul. For them, with their ... inclination to a ... quasi-mystical view of Nature, Spinoza was the 'pantheist' who ... saw in Nature a theophany or immanent manifestation of God" (p. 261).

Having essentially condemned Biehl precisely for omitting Spinoza, Clark thereupon proceeds for several lines to talk down his nose at her, pompously lecturing her about Spinoza's opposition to religious "worship" and his goal of "scientia intuitiva" - and he then proceeds to deny that Spinoza is a mystic! In short, after totally irrelevant meandering, we wind up with Copleston, Bookchin, Biehl - and Clark - *all* agreeing that Baruch Spinoza was not a mystic! And no one said otherwise! What could have been Clark's inscrutable purpose in mentioning Spinoza at all, let alone dwelling on him at such length? Did he even have one, beyond trying to throw academic sand in the eyes of the reader?

No less flighty is Clark's complaint that Biehl "shows no understanding of [Ken Wilber's] ideas and seems to have consulted one of his books only [!] to find useful quotations." Only one? Biehl consulted the specific chapter in one of the two books to which Clark *himself* refers the reader in "A Social Ecology" (p. 11, n. 23). In fact, *A Brief History of Everything* is one of Wilber's most popular books - a volume of interviews that makes relatively few intellectual demands on the reader - to which Clark himself twice refers to the reader (notes 23 and 27). Had Biehl chosen to, she would have had no difficulty whatever in finding scores of pages in the other book Clark cites (*Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*) that reveal the mystical undercurrents in Wilber's thinking.

While Wilber is certainly to be congratulated for firmly separating himself from romantic nature mystics (many of whom Clark so zealously admires), he has been the first to acknowledge that strong mystical notions run through his writings, which combine transpersonal psychology with a great deal of Eastern religion. From his *No Boundary* in 1979 to his *A Brief History of Everything* in 1996, Wilber has produced a transpersonal "synthesis" of "everything" in psychology, philosophy, religion, and certainly mysticism - including a nearly reverential exposition of Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, and the writings of that psychomystical fraud Jung. (Whether Clark would denounce Wilber's avowed synthesis as "system-building," a charge he levels against my work, I do not profess to know.) Hegel certainly influenced Wilber's writings, but to overlook their mystical focus is to present Wilber simply as a Hegelian, which is patently not the case.

Wilber draws parallels between the development of the individual and the development of the species, which (while of often-doubtful value) he employs to support his associations between infantile and early childhood deep-preoperational mental activities on the one hand with primitive and Paleolithic magic on the other; early youthful

concrete operational thinking with classical myth-making activities; and finally, in modern times, early adult and more mature stages of life with hypothetico-deductive and scientific forms of thinking. This tempting but highly suspect stages theory of human mental development can easily become too deterministic, not unlike vulgar Marxist notions that draw a direct correspondence between the innovation of specific technological innovations and specific stages of economic development.

Moreover, Wilber significantly does not take full account of the profoundly social factors - the shamanistic guilds, priestly orders, and state institutions, as well as commercial, class, and market developments - that profoundly fostered the rise of some kinds of thinking at the expense others. In Wilber's work, to an overwhelming degree, ideologies emerge as the product of psychic and mental processes, not of social conditions.

Accordingly, Wilber lays out four major levels of mental operations - the archaic, magic, mythic, and rational, with all of the latter's subdivisions. Much in these developmental stages is very dubious today, particularly considering the juvenile ideological regressions that are occurring en masse in our culture (a problem to which Dr. Clark is zealously contributing by reducing social ecology to a spiritual outlook and revolutionary anarchism to a tepid ecocommunitarianism). Wilber draws basic concepts for his stages theory from transpersonal psychology, in ways that are far removed from the material or social realities of history and the present time. It probably adds a great deal of popular appeal to his work that he tends to formulate his levels of human development in mythic terms that are very attractive to the California and Colorado subcultures where many of his American devotees live. On this literary level, his work is more mystical than perhaps he himself might even want to acknowledge.

Although Wilber is to be applauded for dismissing the gushing New Age romanticism as fatuous and for refusing to defer to it, he himself seems to play a role in the very cultural regression he laments. Unlike social ecology, Wilber tries to account for our basic social ills, not with the social categories of domination and hierarchy but with a hazy, largely psychological "dualism." Also unlike social ecology, he tries to recover on a highly idealistic level a new contact between the personal self and the "larger" ecological Self - a view that has swallowed up the more poetic deep ecologists, not to speak of Clark. Indeed, Wilber's appeal for a new Hero Myth to unite body and mind - or his "Centauric" hero, as he calls the myth - is a substitution for a revolutionary approach to the *social* problems that actually obstruct self-development and consciousness today.

All of this leads Wilber to paint his desirable future in heavily mystical terms. His 763-page tome *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* (published in 1995) is an integrative and often dizzying amalgam of ideas from thinkers ranging from Plotinus to Morris Berman, with numerous pure flakes scattered in between. This surprisingly uncritical and highly mystical "synthesis" offers us, for example, "Schelling in the West" (Schelling being the least serious idealist of the German *Aufklaerung*, whom Hegel sharply criticized in his preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*) and the Indian mystic "Aurobindo in the East" (who, says Wilber, helped his acolytes lay the "foundation for the World Federation and council of all beings" - possibly a transpersonal United Nations of the Teutonic races, considering Aurobindo's explicit racism (pp. 521, 522).

Presenting his own utopia, Wilber unfortunately offers a little something for nearly everyone, including "emerging glimpses of the Over-Soul as the World-Soul" (the evidence for which he finds "quite compelling") (p. 521), and a "vision" of a "descended science" that "would rediscover the self-organizing and self-transcending nature of

evolution itself," a partial truth that does not fit at all with Wilber's hope that science will eventually "pave the way for an *evolution beyond rationality*," to "transrational perception, a *scientia visionis*" that will provide all of us with "glimmers of a true Descent of the all-pervading World Soul" (p. 524, emphasis in the original). This is transpersonal psychology drenched in mysticism.

Wilber's answers to the world's more pressing social problems, on the other hand, can be quite pedestrian. Queried, for example, in *A Brief History of Everything* (a work cited by Clark) about the sources of the "modern ecological crisis," Wilber responds that "industrialization" produced a "mononature" that is a "purely [!] industrial ontology" (p. 273). This explanation, coming from the empyrean heights of a vague "ontology," of a visible crisis in humanity's relationship with the natural world (whose source lies in the capitalist market and in social domination), may satisfy well-fed middle-class people in the 1990s, but it is entirely obfuscatory in explaining the social and economic realities of environmental degradation. Its close proximity to the antitechnological kitsch of the petty-bourgeois and lifestyle anarchists (which I have criticized elsewhere) is no guide to radical social action.

As to Clark's knowledge of modern science, perhaps the less said the better. Thus, although he airily dismisses as laughable Biehl's remark that "science has been unable to locate [his] ultimate ground," he offers not a grain of objective evidence to support what he is talking about. If physics ever does establish the existence of a particle that is "ultimate" in the sense that it precedes any of the particles with which we are already more or less familiar - and it certainly may do so one day - it will be the result, not of mystical insight, but of logical coherence and experimental evidence.

In fact, the only evidence Clark offers us as the possible basis for a "ground" is the work of two philosophers, Kant and Merleau-Ponty, who are hardly physical scientists; and the Zen Marxist Kovel, whose concept of a "plasma of being," says Clark, "... is based not on mere speculation, but on a profound consideration [!] of human experience, especially in relation to the fact that we are powerfully shaped in some ways by our precategorial, prelinguistic experience during our early stages of life." This is closer to psychobabble than to scientific insight. Indeed, it is precisely Biehl's point that belief in a "plasma" may be based on highly arguable psychological factors derived from infancy, or on Kovel's own intuitions about them, but on nothing more. Nor does Clark improve his argument by invoking psychoanalytic thought, from which, he says, "other important investigations of preconceptual realities stem" - and proceeds to give us nothing but his and Kovel's sovereign opinions. With all the individuals and disciplines he cites, Clark offers us no primordial continuum of any kind that improves upon the searching work of the physical sciences. Far from writing anything "laughable," Biehl in fact simply stated a true fact.

As for the momentous question of whether Clark is a Taoist: In response to his RA List denial that he is one (Sept. 24) - a remarkable denial in view of his continued favourable references to Taoism - Biehl quoted the opening lines to his chapter "Master Lao and the Anarchist Prince," wherein Clark wrote:

"the *Lao Tzu* is one of the great anarchist classics. Indeed, there are good reasons to conclude that no [!] important philosophical work of either East or West has ever been so thoroughly pervaded by the anarchistic spirit, and that none [!] of the Western political thinkers known as major anarchist theorists (Godwin, Proudhon, Stirner, Bakunin, and Kropotkin) have been nearly as

consistent in drawing out the implications of the anarchist perspective" (*The Anarchist Moment*, p. 165).

It is notable that Clark, in his RA List response, completely ignores Biehl's quotation, from which I must conclude that in the future we may safely refer to him as a Taoist without the least fear of contradiction.

Then there is the mystic Aurobindo, whose love of the "Teutonic races" Biehl cited. Her intention was to show, as she put it, that "owing to the irrationality and arbitrariness of mysticism, the political views that accompany a mystical outlook can often take a dubious, even reactionary character." Clark now complains: "The attempt to link me to such ideas betrays, I think, a certain level of bad faith." One cannot help but ask how many ways Clark wants to discuss a problem: If he does not like the politics of the people he considers to be basic to his "social ecology," he should either refrain from quoting them prominently in his theoretical articles or else forewarn the reader that they are politically reactionary - not denigrate as a "quotation hunter" the messenger who bears the information, or complain about "bad faith"!

We encounter here Clark's tendency merely to provide his readers with a quick glimpse of an idea, without exploring its origins, the tradition of which it is part, the social interests it may express or support, or its social or theoretical context. He is ordinarily incapable of generalizing from an idea's past and present, let alone of developing its logic to its likely culmination. We saw this clearly with the case of Naess, and we see it again with the implications of mysticism. To use a loose metaphor: Clark does not generalize as much as he invokes an item that is frozen in a given time, place, and posture, without providing any clear sense of its trajectory toward a degree of logical completeness. Lao-tsu springs out of the air from nowhere; so too do the numerous thinkers Clark merely

lists, despite the different traditions to which they belong and the potential significance - socially as well as theoretically - that their ideas have for their time and our own. Indeed, the most unifying feature of "A Social Ecology" is the mystical tradition on which the author persistently falls back.

In short, Clark provides his readers with little more than lists of names, hints, and suggestions of phenomena - objective no less than subjective - that are completely denuded of their roots and directionality. He seldom if ever *probes* ideas to their social and cultural sources; rather, he divests them of their social past and context, their ideological implications, and their role in the modern world, as though he were trotting them out in bibliographies for academic seminars. If Biehl reminds Clark that Aurobindo is a politically odious racist, he blames *her* for pointing it out, without letting us know anything about Aurobindo's political credentials. One could, with the same aplomb, categorize Alain de Benoist as a decentralist without recognizing that his views are advanced in the context of the French New Right.

To further build his newfound argument that he is not a mystic, Clark complains that Biehl fails to mention Merleau-Ponty, whom he presumably considers to be a rationalist (or at least a non-irrationalist; it is hard to tell how Clark designates the philosopher, except as nonmystical). Accordingly, Clark complains that Biehl "dogmatically" ignores the section of his "Social Ecology" article called "No Nature," where he deals with the French phenomenologist in a footnote (no less!), along with his (supposedly rational) concept of "ontological matrix" (p. 15, n. 30).

Whether a footnote on Merleau-Ponty is sufficient to prove that one is not mystical, the fact is that Biehl did indeed mention Clark's "No Nature" section, specifically the part where Clark laments the rejection of religion by the Young Hegelians.

She had no reason to mention Merleau-Ponty as a rationalist. Indeed it is Clark himself - in the very note to which he directs us! - who informs us that Merleau-Ponty posits a "primordial being" that "in every respect baffles reflection [!]" May I suggest that so "baffling" a "primordial being" is hardly an acceptable subject for rational discourse. Based on such a passage, neither Biehl nor anyone else would have cause to regard Merleau-Ponty as a rationalist. (Nor are the other thinkers whom Clark mentions in this section - Lao-tzu, Boehme, Kovel - notable rationalists.) In fact, Clark actually quotes the French philosopher on a point where he is probably most mystical: namely, his invocation of "a mysterious tissue or matrix," one that "in every respect baffles reflection" - that is, not open to discursive explication.

Poor Merleau-Ponty! At the time of his untimely death at fifty-three in 1961, he was heading in a direction that only his god will now know - especially after he had made his peace with Roman Catholicism. His untimely death has left him fair game for all sorts of philosophical interpreters in Euro-American academies and salons. Some recent trends in philosophy have made him into a "fleshy" Gaian; others an unrelenting "inquisitor" or doubter; still others, a dyed-in-the-wool humanist; and still others, a late-converted Catholic, especially among the more devout parts of the French public that attended the mass that the French Church (no yielding institution!) held for him after his death. It is hard to tell if his replacement of Being with "flesh" meant that this sensuous philosopher was moving in a biological direction, a humanist one, or a religio-metaphysical one. In any case, can Clark really say with a straight face (as he does in his October 13 RA List message) that Merleau-Ponty is not at least a "source of irrationalisms"? It requires more effort than I can muster to take this double-talk seriously.

Very often, instead of answering a criticism straightforwardly, Clark tries to deflect it back onto his critic, in what might generously be called a *detournement* if it were not merely sophomoric. Thus, strangely unable to come to terms with the centrality of mystical philosophers in his own work, Clark instead tries to portray Biehl and myself as mystics! Indeed, by the end of his essay, this charlatan even denotes us as nothing less than "shameless mystics." One may well ask: On what rope does he hang this charge? The answer: On a passage in *The Ecology of Freedom* in which I figuratively allude to the Genesis myth! As though citing a myth for metaphorical purposes were equivalent to propounding mysticism! And, indeed, as if a passing citation were comparable to a foundation stone for one's philosophy! One can only say that this is Clark at his most desperate and demagogic. He accepts wholesale some mystical shysters as foundation stones for his "dialectical holism," goes on to deny that he is mystical, then finally equates *my* passing allusion to a myth with a mystical outlook!

Clark proceeds to quote a passage on animism, where I wrote: "perhaps we *can* achieve a way of thinking and experiencing that involves a quasi-animistic respiritization of phenomena - inanimate as well as animate - without abandoning the insights provided by science and analytical reasoning." It should be noted that in 1991 I wrote a new, extended introduction to the second edition of *The Ecology of Freedom*, in which I flatly disclaimed the mythical elements, even the nature-romanticism that mars that book. In the late 1970s, when I was writing the book, I had been trying to free ecological thinking from the instrumental environmentalism that prevailed at the time, acknowledging that a good deal of junk had crept into my writing - which I openly repudiated in my 1991 introduction. One would think that this ability to admit error on my part would absolve me precisely of Clark's parrot-like charge of "dogmatism." Inasmuch as Clark is engaged in

character assassination, not the pursuit of truth, I become subject to the charge of self-contradiction for views that I have frankly acknowledged were wrong!

### **The "Dialectics" of the Void**

If there is one word that Clark applies to me in a more parrotlike manner than "dogmatic" and "sectarian," it is "non-dialectical." In his recent writings, in fact, the frequency with which he applies this word to my own views and "dialectical" to his own becomes so bombastic that the perceptive reader may well wonder whether Clark is sure of his own familiarity with dialectics.

In his reply to Biehl, for example, Clark emphatically disdains what he calls my "attempts at philosophical system-building," which - again! - he considers to be "dogmatic and non-dialectical." (As I noted, Clark levels no such charge against Wilber, a prolific system builder.) Aside from the fact that the word *system* is so ambiguous (many writers whom Clark admires, in fact, are indeed system-builders) that it might even include Clark's own pursuit of the "whole," this condemnation raises fascinating issues. "System-building" is precisely the accusation that, these days, has been hurled most commonly against the work of Hegel, for example, who by all accounts was one of the most outstanding of all dialectical philosophers. To flippantly reject "system-building" as "non-dialectical" is to excise not only Hegel but even Aristotle from the dialectical tradition - two intractable system-builders who are unquestionably the most important figures in the dialectical tradition.

An even sillier and more egregious example of Clark's misuse of "dialectics" is his attempt, while damning Biehl to the naive "precritical" (i.e., pre-Kantian) philosophical domain of sensationalism, to invoke Kant's presumably "true" and "unknowable"

noumenon (thing-in-itself), the reality that lies concealed behind the domain of sensation and that is organized derivatively, if at all, by categories and forms supplied by the human mind. In my view, this dualism between noumenon and phenomenon is far more serious, today, than Descartes' duality of mind and the body as a mechanism. By aligning himself with Kant in this way, Clark appears to accept Kant's position that we cannot know the thing-in-itself because everything is filtered through experience (a position, it is worth noting, that Hegel regarded as basically a form of subjective idealism).

By reverting to a basic Kantian view, however, Clark forfeits (apparently unwittingly, amid all his bluster) his claim even to understand dialectics, let alone practice it. One of Hegel's major endeavours in formulating the most sophisticated dialectics of the Enlightenment era was to show that epistemology (the philosophy of knowledge) must be integrated with ontology (the metaphysics of knowable entities). Hegel's theoretical and historical approach dissolved the dualism between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds that Kant had created, by uniting phenomena and noumena as an *interactive* metaphysics. While restating Kant's claim that the world is perceived and categorized by an innate mental network of concepts and categories (to which he added sentiments, practical interests, and needs), Hegel emphasized that human beings and their sensory-mental equipment emerge out of the seemingly "noumenal" world of "things-in-themselves." That is to say, Hegel observed, if Kant were consistent, he would be obliged to regard *the mind too* as a "thing-in-itself," because it cannot be separated from the noumenal world. (It is worth noting that Nagarjuna, one of the founding thinkers of the Mahayana tradition in Buddhism, also pursued this line of thought in dealing with the notion of an "intrinsic nature of things," for reasons of his own.) Indeed, Hegel mocked Kant's unknowable noumenon or "Ding an sich" with the sarcastic observation that if we know that there are

things-in-themselves - an "unknowable" noumenal world - then we already know more about that world than we would if it were truly unknowable.

Hence, for Hegel, our categorization of perceptions is *part* of the Kantian "reality that precedes all conceptualization" and - owing to the sophistication of knowledge over centuries of intellectual development - becomes increasingly adequate to the reality of which it conceives. To this we can add the fact that science and a naturalistic outlook - by *recreating* the so-called "unknowable" thing-in-itself synthetically, especially through experimental research and the use of instruments that vastly enlarge our sensorium or by tangibly verifiable experience, in conjunction with reason and mathematical formulations - have in fact brought concept and reality into conformity with each other.

It is precisely the regressive nature of mysticism and religion - and the heavy thought of people like Clark - that threatens to set us back to a time when reality was commonly "divined" rather than perceived, intuited rather than reflected upon, and passively received rather than acted upon - and changed! An anarchism left in the hands of a Clark, or for that matter lifestylers and salon anarchists generally, may well spell the death of anarchism as a meaningful body of political ideas, just as Marxist academics have eviscerated Marx's thought and transformed it into an ongoing seminar in bourgeois universities.

To return to Kant and Hegel: So far have modern physics and chemistry advanced beyond Kant's philosophical notion of a noumenal world whose things-in-themselves are concealed to our sensorium and mental processes, that they have speculatively projected domains of reality - from subatomic particles to black holes - that are all but inconceivable to conventional categories of thought. Moreover, they can *verify* the reality of their conjectures in the objective world. Today human beings not only intervene, with an

immense amount of knowledge, in the objective world; they *recreate* it, so to speak, by going beyond the realm of everyday experience to discover worlds that are impossible to configure by means of our ordinary sensoria.

Thus the divide that Kant created between epistemology and ontology has disappeared as a result of a dialectics of *action* (the very opposite of the Taoist *wu wei*). Notwithstanding Clark's incessant use of the word "dialectical" with reference to himself and "non-dialectical" to me, he seems to have not the least understanding that Hegel's dialectical philosophy remedied and overcame Kant's dualism. More often than not, in the course of dumbing-down dialectical philosophy, Clark merely uses the word "dialectics" as a fig leaf to conceal the fact that this emperor is wearing no clothing.

Finally, having previously announced that the work of Lao-tzu is more "pervaded by the anarchistic spirit" than the work of any Western anarchist thinker from Godwin to Kropotkin; Clark now, with appalling intellectual irresponsibility, informs us (in his October 13 message) that he considers Nagarjuna to be the "most radically [!] dialectical of all [!] thinkers." The reader who is unfamiliar with Nagarjuna's slender works or the career of Mahayana Buddhism might well suppose that Clark knows what he is talking about here.

Nagarjuna, a traditional adherent of the ideas of the historic Buddha and the "Four Noble Truths," advocated a "Middle Way" between all extremes - namely between lust and abstinence, wealth and poverty, and so on. Interpretations of his thought have varied enormously over the years, particularly with respect to his *Madhyamikakarika* (a title happily shortened by commentators to the *Karika*) and his much smaller *Vigrahavyavartani*. Almost two millennia separate us from these works, during which time very many interpretations sprouted in an already disputatious religion, or guide for

achieving the absence of suffering, or philosophy - call Buddhism whatever you like. Although Indian thought fascinated the Schlegel brothers and German Romantics generally well into the nineteenth century, Western Buddhologists, until comparatively recently, generally ignored Nagarjuna's works as too nihilistic to deserve their attention. Schopenhauer himself anticipated later interpretations of Nagarjuna by arguing that the Upanishadic term *Brahman* - the inexpressible and imperishable Absolute - could be identified with the Kantian thing-in-itself. Nagarjuna, however, was generally regarded as little more than a nihilist who had nothing to offer Western thought, and the Buddhist nirvana was considered an unascertainable void, or a realm completely inaccessible to discursive exploration.

This view was undermined considerably in the mid-1920s by F. I. Stcherbatsky and the so-called "Leningrad School" of Buddhist scholars, who imparted to Mahayana Buddhism and particularly to Nagarjuna an entirely new meaning. In their view Nagarjuna's philosophy of *sunya* (literally "void," "nothingness," "emptiness," "vacuity") and the state of *sunya* (*sunyata*) were not doctrines of mere "emptiness" but rather concepts that denied the realm of mere appearances in favour of the Absolute - a world, presumably, of things-in-themselves. All of reality, to be sure, was held to be one, but Stcherbatsky gave Nagarjuna's epistemology and ontology a Kantian twist.

In the mid-1950s one of the ablest admirers of Stcherbatsky, T.R.V. Murti, while acknowledging that Nagarjuna had developed a philosophical position similar to that of Kant, went on to confess that the sage was primarily a critic of the philosophical positions of his day. Indeed, there has been a Nagarjuna - not unlike a Spinoza - for almost every philosophical fad since the 1920s, including an analytical Nagarjuna, a Wittgensteinian Nagarjuna, a pragmatic Nagarjuna, a postmodernist Nagarjuna, and so forth. Nagarjuna

has been considered variously a pure nihilist, a realist, a Kantian, a logical positivist, a proto-Wittgensteinian, an ethicist, and a critic pure and simple.

Happily, Nagarjuna does tell us from across the centuries that "if I had any proposition, then [a particular] defect would be mine. I have, however, no proposition. Therefore there is no defect that is mine" (verse 29 of the *Vigrahavyavartani*, Battacharya's translation). And I strongly suspect he meant it. Nagarjuna appears to have been, most clearly, a devout follower of the so-called historical Buddha. By a process of unrelenting critique, he tried to clear Buddhism of cant and overelaboration - in short, to arrest its development into an esoteric, monkish, and elitist religion, morality, and philosophy.

To the extent that Nagarjuna had any philosophy, it was indeed the "Middle Way" of no extremes (a concept that appears to resemble the Western "golden mean" as a behavioural guide). The very title of his most important work, the *Madhyamikakarika* (translated from the Sanskrit by Kenneth K. Inada in 1970 and by David J. Kalupahana in 1986) as the "Middle Way" suggests its focus. It consists of twenty-seven short chapters that contain, by my count, 408 verses, in the form of short Sanskrit couplets. The two translations of this work that I have read by no means agree with each other, and Kalupahana (the more recent translator) pauses from time to time to criticize Inada's translation of certain verses.

With his usual aplomb, Clark airily calls Nagarjuna "the most radical" dialectician, presumably of all time. In my view, this obfuscatory remark is pure rubbish - as irresponsible as it is ahistorical. To the extent that one can even speak of a dialectic in Nagarjuna, it consists primarily of subverting an opponent's view (and Nagarjuna had many opponents!) by reducing it to an absurdity. Like many Eastern thinkers, he tended -

not to formulate a philosophy of *development* and *differentiation*, which are basic to Western dialectical thought - but to strip down reality and others' arguments about it. The mere presence of ideas of occurrence and dissolution (the theme of chapter 21 of the *Karika*), for example, does not constitute a dialectic; they are a major theme of all agricultural civilizations, for which birth and death define the contours of life. Nor does the "relational" view of Nagarjuna, which sees any phenomenon in connection with another one or with the "whole," constitute a dialectical "condition" in itself.

Most important in dialectic is the notion of potentiality, rational development, and differentiation in the form of growing subjectivity. These ideas are not to be found in the writings of Nagarjuna, who is quite explicit about his basic ideas: "'Non-identity, non-interruption, and non-continuity.' These are the immortal teachings of the world's patron *Buddhas*" (chapter 28, verse 11 of the *Karika*, Inada translation.) No - Nagarjuna was no dialectician.

By a process of critical reduction, Nagarjuna seems to have arrived at an "Absolute" or a "One" that, if anything, corresponds to Hegel's category of "Being." In his logical works, however, Hegel alternated this "Being" with "Nothing," so as to yield his category of "Becoming," thereby initiating his stunning edifice of dialectically educated categories. By contrast, Eastern dialectical thought comes to a dead end precisely where Hegel's actually begins - namely, in Buddhism's vague notion of *sunya* or Void. Buddhism - and of course Nagarjuna - is concerned with a process of *cleansing*, *purification*, and, by inference, *simplification*, not with ontological differentiation and elaboration. Indeed, as Inada tells us, truth for the Buddha is "non-relational, non-descriptive, non-differential" - a bedrock (Being?) that may be nonconceptual as well. But since I make no claims to be a

Buddhologist, I shall leave this highly esoteric matter in the hands of others who can conceive of the inconceivable and know that there is an "unknowable."

Considering the economy of Clark's reference to Nagarjuna, I cannot be sure that he has ever read the *Karika* in the Inada and Kalupahana translations. But he does inform us that Nagarjuna taught him a methodological approach in which "in affirming anything [!] of any [!] reality, we must investigate the ways in which it is, the ways in which it is not, and the ways in which it neither is nor is not." Nagarjuna's "four-cornered logic," as his interpreters have called this prescription, appears in chapter 27, verse 8, of the *Karika*. Kalupahana, in his annotation on the famous verse, observes that "Nagarjuna's statements have failed to reveal any form of four-cornered logic that he used to establish an ultimate truth. Whenever he utilized it, he did so to reject metaphysical assumptions, rather than to establish something or some theory" (David J. Kalupahana, *Nagarjuna: The Middle Way*, Albany: State University of New York, 1986, p. 270). Which is precisely the point I wish to make.

Western dialectic, particularly in the hands of the Left Hegelians (whom Clark condemns in "A Social Ecology" for rejecting religion) is precisely a dialectic of *development* and *differentiation*. (The word "Becoming" does not fully convey its creative and rational possibilities.) It is an ontology as well as a logic of differentiation, *creative* negation, and elaboration that stands *fundamentally* at odds with Clark's simplistic and questionable emphasis on things *as they are* and with Nagarjuna's concern with identifying *what* things are. To miss this difference between the two "dialectics" - one that is critical primarily by means of *reductio ad absurdum* of opponents' arguments, the other that is critical by means of a constructive, developmental, and richly differentiated approach - is to confuse dialectic with negation pure and simple. Nagarjuna, as far as I can judge (and

his interpreters differ among themselves), appears to be free of any concept of sublation or development. That Clark cites his methodology in verse 8 as evidence of the "most radical dialectic" seems (who can really tell what Clark means?) to reveal an effort on his part to adorn the strong element of negativism or refutation in Nagarjuna's philosophy with the rich depths of Western (particularly Hegelian) dialectical philosophy. And above all to take a swipe at his former mentor.

May I suggest that in practice (namely, Nagarjuna's resolute subversion of his opponents' positions), the Eastern philosopher's method approximates a commonsensical interplay between ordinary induction and deduction? Everyday thinking is capable of grasping identities: what things are and are not, and so on. How radically different this is from Hegel's processual, ever-differentiating, fecund, and developing dialectic - from a thing "in itself," to a thing "for itself," to a thing "in and for itself" - can be judged by a reading of his extraordinary *Encyclopedia Logic*. Only a naive thinker or simply a bad one could place Nagarjuna's couplets and paragraphs on one side of the philosophical scales, so to speak, and weigh them against the vastness, variety, profundity, and historical richness that marks Hegel's basic works, on the other - then find the scale favouring Nagarjuna!

Ironically, Clark's praise for Nagarjuna as "ruthlessly critical" stands flatly at odds with his aversion for the critical approach that Biehl and I take toward various ideas that he has adopted. "In their analysis of views they oppose," he writes in his October 13 message, "Bookchin and Biehl often make use of a ruthlessly inquisitorial method that does considerable violence [!] to any text they examine." This is really delicious! Clark waxes ecstatic over Nagarjuna's "ruthlessly critical" method - then snidely condemns our "ruthlessly inquisitorial" critiques. Indeed, if there is any sense in which one can

legitimately call Nagarjuna "dialectical," it is precisely because he is "ruthlessly inquisitorial," i.e. *critical* - to the point of rendering his opponents' contentions absurd.

The two definitions of *inquisitor* that appear in my dictionary are "one who inquires or makes inquiries," and one who is "severely harsh and hostile" in doing so. Clark obviously intends to portray me as the latter, a veritable Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor par excellence. Anyone who can think beyond Clark's aversion for the "inquisitorial" may care to ask: Was it not Socrates who, as an "inquisitor," ruthlessly demanded that his interlocutors clarify and explain their words and ideas? Indeed, is it not in the very nature of "inquisition" simply in the Socratic sense to demand explanations? An essential feature of the dialectical "method" is *precisely* the need to adopt an "inquisitorial" approach toward a category or phenomenon, probing so "ruthlessly" that, as throughout Hegel's works, it must give up its fixity - which may be about as far as Nagarjuna took it - but then turn into its opposite and, above all, raise both as an *Aufhebung*, the "in and for itself" - the return to and development *beyond* the "in itself" from which Hegel starts.

Clark once complained (in a letter to Peter Zegers) that "Bookchin demands too many explanations." When Zegers replied that he demanded the same thing, it apparently ended their correspondence. In this dismal and darkening world, it might be supposed that we are greatly in need precisely of "explanations," particularly to see through the illusions and mystifications that conceal the social conditions and social relations that now threaten to send humanity to perdition. Remove explanations from philosophy and science, and what is left: Intuitions? Superstitions? Mystifications? The whole thrust of Hellenic rationalism, the Enlightenment, the modern revolutionary tradition, socialism, social anarchism, and the struggle for a free society has been toward finding rational

explanations for social phenomena, then taking action on the basis of knowledge to *change* them. Saying this in no way denies the value of the aesthetic, the intuitive, sentiment, the artistic, and the erotic and, above all, in inspiring human will to *change* the world and the relations that make up social life - rather than quietistically yield to them.

I would not fault Clark for emphasizing these nonrational aspects of life, were it not that he essentially surrenders the rational to the irrational - precisely at a time when the irrational - and the mystical - threaten to engulf consciousness today. In contrast to the Western and certain elements in the Eastern dialectic, Clark's amorphous "dialectics" is scattered with vague allusions and hints about "parts" and "wholes," ambiguous formulations, and fudged opinions. What does a completely nonexplanatory statement such as "A dialectical holism is at the same time a dialectical anti-holism" mean, by any rational standard? Like Clark/Cafard's "Surregionalist Manifesto," this line leaves us in a theoretical wasteland of sophomoric inversions, mystical paradoxes, and pseudo-wisdom. It exhibits a fear of firmly committing oneself to anything tangible or concrete (lest one be criticized?). Most of all, Clark's express disdain for explanation and his bias toward the nonrational appear to be an odious attempt to make himself acceptable to ecophilosophies that are more fashionable today than social ecology, indeed ecophilosophies whose acolytes detest demands for rational explanations and whose politics are expressly statist.

This hazy approach is not without costs. When it comes to politics, Clark verges on the preposterous: "Let the next Gathering of the Greens conduct all its business in poetry" (Max Cafard, "The Surregionalist Manifesto," *Fifth Estate*, vol. 28, no. 1 Spring 1993, p. 18). That such a prospect is more likely to instill *wu wei* - the receptivity, passivity, and quietism advanced by the *Tao te Ching* - than to advance social and political change, is transparently a product of his Taoist outlook.

Clark's accusations that my work is "ahistorical" - and they can be found in many of his recent writings - are particularly demagogic. Indeed, with sovereign contempt for his readers, he seems to be willing to say just about anything that casts me in a negative light, regardless of the truth. Only an outright liar could deny that my theoretical ideas are drenched in history, as anyone knows who has read *The Limits of the City* (Black Rose Books), *From Urbanization to Cities* (Cassell; equivalently, *Urbanization Without Cities*, Black Rose), *The Spanish Anarchists* (A.K. Press), *The Ecology of Freedom* (Black Rose), and the two already-published volumes of *The Third Revolution* (Cassell), not to speak of articles, pamphlets, and about a thousand manuscript pages on the interrelationships between society and philosophy over the course of ancient, medieval, and modern history.

Do I have to emphasize, at this late date, that *From Urbanization to Cities* in particular is an in-depth historical study of municipal development and politics, including a distinctly nonidealistic and often programmatic account of how my ideas can be put into practice? And do I really have to defend myself against Clark's outrageous claim that my work is "idealistic" - when his own articles float in an ahistorical and idealistic realm of "pure thought" and when his own purely conceptual books scarcely step outside the realm of pseudo-philosophy, often immersed in "imaginaries"? Indeed, that I should even have to take cognizance of these absurd "accusations," let alone justify myself in the light of them, is an indignity that I shall endure for the last time in this reply.

### **Whither Revolutionary Anarchism?**

To readers who accept Clark's outrageous accusation that I am eager to become anarchism's new "swami," may I note that in my declining years, as the political spectrum moves ever farther to the right (dragging far too many anarchists along with it), popular appreciation means nothing to me. It is my conviction that in the absence of a well-

organized form of human agency to consciously and systematically change this world for the better, it will indeed be changed - but by the blind forces of capitalism to the detriment of all life, especially human life, on this planet. The bourgeoisie is not going to placidly surrender its powers to spiritual ecocommunitarians who casually form what amounts to encounter groups and surrender themselves to *wu wei*. I remain as devoted today as I was as an adolescent to the effort to achieve a libertarian socialist revolution, notwithstanding all the odds that militate against it - including social democrats and lifestyle anarchists as well as the bourgeoisie and its supporters. Although it is a revolution I know I will never see, I would far rather fight even a rearguard action for the integrity of the revolutionary tradition, the Enlightenment, and reason, than win the adulation of pampered baby boomers. In fact, to gain the reverence of many baby boomers and their Generation X offspring today would be, not a gauge of success, but grounds for me to suspect that I was doing something profoundly wrong, even unsavoury.

For nearly forty years I have tried to *expand* the anarchist tradition and *enhance* its relevance for the future by infusing it with insights from ecology, dialectics, critical theory, anthropology, history, the rich contributions that can be acquired from the writings of Marx, and a revolutionary libertarian politics. John Clark is producing an ecocommunitarianism that is merely *influenced* by anarchism, together with mysticism, Asian philosophy, psychoanalysis, existentialism, phenomenology, and postmodernism. In effect, this man does not *extend* the anarchist tradition or any tendency in it; he steps conveniently out of it when it suits him and his audience of the moment and, if anything, promotes a regression toward a psychology of mystical self-expression in flat distinction to one of social revolution. In the intellectual vacuum of the 1990s, this "dialectician's" ideas have no core, or what Hegel would have regarded as an "essence," and he has

worked himself into a relativistic position, with no objective standards by which to judge truth, falsehood, or even right and wrong.

I have tried to enlarge and extend anarchist theory, educing it from principles that begin with a self-directive form of natural and social evolution. By contrast, Clark/Cafard writes from a position that seemingly favours everything (the "whole") and is therefore immune to definition, let alone criticism - a safe but patently vacuous position. Everything is merely part of a "whole" - which itself remains undefined and conveniently unexplained. Being everywhere and nowhere, Clark has become a chameleon, sidling up to socialists in CNS, to lifestyle anarchists in *Anarchy* and *Fifth Estate*, and to deep ecologists in *Inquiry* and *Trumpeter*. To the extent that one can describe his views, they are radically reductionist: a philosophical journey back to an unknowable and ineffable Being; a dissolution of history and ideas into imaginaries; and a contemptible recourse to ad hominem attacks. Yes, I challenge him to publish on the RA List his "Confession" and "Bookchin Agonistes"! The "Middle Way" imputed to Nagarjuna becomes not the "blessed life" of Buddhism but the queasy liberalism of social democracy, with its parliamentary commitments and its laissez-faire approach to patently conflicting ideas and their consequences.

In sum, my confrontation with Clark is a confrontation between the Enlightenment and the counter-Enlightenment, rationality and irrationality, secularism and mysticism (if not an emerging religion), activism and quietism, innovation and adaptation, and, most basically, the revolutionary tradition and the reformist tradition.

It is this, I believe, RA List subscribers should properly weigh in their minds, rather than Clark's dubious responses and often unaddressed evasions of criticism. If other list subscribers find that they cannot voice support for secularism, rationality, activism,

innovation, and the revolutionary tradition, then I see no purpose in engaging in any further debate over these issues here. Let others speak up; I have neither the lifespan nor the desire to continue this one-sided defence of ideas that younger anarchists should also be defending. Only insofar as anarchism is revolutionary, and upholds its claim to higher libertarian and moral dimensions than other kinds of socialism, do I find it worth supporting. In a few weeks I shall be 78, and I have other projects that I wish to complete, rather than squander my time responding to this malicious careerist and ingrate. I no longer wish to defend anarchism against anarchists, least of all those with social democratic affinities. Hence with this response, I bow out.

Murray Bookchin

Burlington, Vermont